

through the local inspector, than through the controller at Ottawa. Suppose a letter is lost in British Columbia, how much more readily can the evil be remedied if the local inspector is applied to in that province, and sends out his tracer, than that the complaint should be made to the controller at Ottawa, who will send out his tracers from here. The Postmaster General has not said there were too many mail clerks, but he thinks there is too much red tape, and he objects to a sort of irresponsibility which occurs when the mail clerks go beyond the division of the inspectors to whom they are responsible. I hardly think that is a very serious objection, but at all events it is not such as to necessitate the institution of all this new machinery. The hon. gentleman under this Bill makes the machinery more complicated, because he has divided the authority as to the search for letters lost in the land mail service, and the search for letters lost in the railway mail service. One searches in vain through the remarks of the Postmaster General to find a single substantial reason why this change should be made. The hon. gentleman has not stated, nor does anybody believe, that the present inspectors have been overworked, or that they require any relief in that direction. The Bill divides the responsibility between the land mail service and the railway mail service, and complicates the machinery. I should think that the experience of the heads of departments would lead them to centralize the responsibility as much as possible and to do that we should keep the service intact. Unless it can be shown that the railway mail clerks have been remiss in their duty generally, and unless the searching for lost letters has been a failure under the present system, no good reasons can be offered for this Bill.

Mr. FOSTER. There are a few questions I would like to ask the Postmaster General, because I imagine my hon. friend (Mr. Mulock) has fully matured his information on this, having had so long a period to bring his measure before Parliament. It is objectionable in that the proposition in the 119th section looks towards centralizing the power in the hands of the Minister himself, which I am sure would be very disturbing to him, which would add greatly to his responsibilities, and which I do not think ought to be admitted as a general principle of legislation regarding the post office or any other department. I grant you from the start that the head of a department must have some power of control over the department to its uttermost point; otherwise the unity and consistency of the working of the whole department may suffer. But when the head of the department proposes in a Bill, in several points, to over-concentrate power in himself, and when general principles of great importance are shoved to one side in order to afford that concen-

Mr. CLANCY.

tration of power, I think that is very objectionable. The Chairman has stated that we are on clause 119. Very true; but I take it that all the sections of this Bill are members of one family, and that the blood relationship is found in them all. In section 2 we find the same principle of drawing inordinate control and power into the hands of the head of the department that we find in section 119.

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I think you ought not to discuss section 2 now. I suppose you would be able to make time on the other just as well.

Mr. FOSTER. I think I am in order in showing that what is a vicious principle in 119 is a vicious principle also in section 2, and we must take the Bill as a whole and object to it as a whole. In that section 2--

The POSTMASTER GENERAL. I must object to the hon. gentleman discussing section 2. He can do time on section 119 just as well.

• Mr. FOSTER. I must discuss it, and if my hon. friend feels that he cannot grasp the argument without my first giving an outline of it, I will give an outline of it, and show that the one section has a bearing on the other. What I object to in section 119 is the principle of putting an overconcentrated power into the hands of the head of the department. If I can show that in section 2 that some over-concentration of power is aimed at by my hon. friend, a repetition of the offence in the same Bill makes the Bill all the more objectionable, and renders my argument all the stronger. I hope my hon. friend will not object on the ground of irrelevancy. In section 2 we find the principle violated of giving all these contracts by tender. In that section the hon. gentleman proposes, under certain circumstances, to take away the right of tender, and to take the right of granting contracts to himself. Having received tenders, if the lowest tender is higher than the interest of the public services warrants him in paying, then he would have power to take the matter up and award the contract to any person to whom he might wish to award it, the only limitation being that he did not give as much to the contractor as the lowest tender amounted to. Now, I take it upon me to say that in ninety-nine out of a hundred mail routes throughout the Dominion of Canada, the matter would be settled by the first calling for tenders; the lowest tender would be a reasonable tender, and would be accepted. In fact, the rule is that the getting of a little ready money in their hands quarterly induces men to neglect their business in order to carry the mails for a mere pittance, in some cases hardly enough to pay the wear and tear of their horses and carriages. I believe that in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand the work is done at absurdly